

## Personal Use

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### Definitions

**Personal use** means activity that is conducted for purposes other than accomplishing official or otherwise authorized activity.

**NOAA office equipment** includes but is not limited to: personal computers and related peripheral equipment (e.g., scanners and printers) and software, including Internet connectivity and e-mail; library resources (e.g., office copies of dictionaries, local telephone directories, and the Code of Federal Regulations); telephones; facsimile machines; photocopiers; office supplies (e.g., computer and fax machine paper); and office space and furnishings.

**Staff non-work time** means times when you are not otherwise expected to be addressing official business. You may use NOAA office equipment during your off-duty hours such as before or after a workday (subject to local office hours), lunch periods, authorized breaks, or weekends or holidays (if your duty station is normally available at such times).

### Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment

Limited use of NOAA office equipment for personal needs during staff non-work time is allowed if the use does not interfere with official business, involves minimal additional expense for NOAA, and does not reflect adversely on NOAA or DOC. Employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally in the workplace and are required under the Standards of Conduct to refrain from using Government office equipment for activities that are inappropriate.

**Minimal additional expense** means that personal use of NOAA office equipment is limited to those situations where NOAA is already providing equipment or services and your use of such equipment or services will not result in any additional expense to NOAA or the use will result in only normal wear and tear or the use of small amounts of electricity, ink, toner, or paper.

Employees have **no inherent right** to use government office equipment for other than official activities. The privilege to use Government equipment for non-government purposes may be revoked or limited at any time by NOAA management.

Examples of limited personal use include:

- Making a few photocopies using NOAA-supplied paper (five pages or less on an infrequent basis), or by using employee-supplied paper;
- Using a computer printer with NOAA-supplied paper to print out a few pages of material (five pages or less on an infrequent basis) or by using employee-supplied paper;
- Making personal phone calls;

- Sending or receiving personal e-mail messages - you may use a NOAA Networked personal computer to check your personal e-mail accounts as long as this is done during non-work hours. You may not send e-mail for work purposes through your personal e-mail account;
- Sending or receiving a personal fax (five pages or less on an infrequent basis);
- Telephone calls or emails with a family member or care provider to advise of a change in schedule, to make alternative transportation arrangements, or to check on or arrange alternative childcare arrangements as long as the call or e-mail takes only a few minutes to complete;
- Use of NOAA office equipment (e.g., facsimile machine, telephone, or copier) in connection with personal business that can only be conducted during working hours, such as a local government agency, school, bank, or physician;
- Calls home to check on a sick family member; and
- Use of the Internet as described below.

## **Personal Internet Use**

Internet services provided by NOAA during official working hours are to be used for authorized purposes only, i.e., use must be in the official interest of NOAA and related to employees' assigned duties, except as noted below.

NOAA personnel may use the Internet for non-official use (Internet searches, e-mail, etc.) provided:

- Use does not adversely affect the employee's performance or accomplishment of the NOAA mission;
- Use is during non-working hours; and
- Use does not reflect adversely on NOAA or DOC, e.g., does not result in any appearance of impropriety or unnecessary costs to the Federal Government.

## **Authorized Internet Use**

Use the Internet to accomplish job responsibilities and to further NOAA's mission. Authorized use includes:

- Communicating with fellow members of a committee in a professional organization;
- Collaborating on articles and other writings;
- Transferring the full text of uncopyrighted manuals, documentation, or self-teaching workbooks;
- Connecting to resources that provide information relating to career and educational opportunities;
- Reading electronic mail discussion groups on professional or future career development topics;
- Conducting research concerning information, products, or services in support of NOAA's mission; and
- Using office printers for personal Internet and e-mail provided the use does not consume excessive resources.

## **Misuse and Inappropriate Personal Use of Office Equipment**









Misuse or inappropriate personal use of NOAA office equipment during work and staff non-work time includes:

- Any personal use that could cause congestion, delay, or disruption of service to any NOAA system or equipment, such as viewing, downloading, or storing greeting cards, video, sound, or other large files sent to you as an e-mail attachment or using NOAA-installed software that facilitates streaming download, such as listening to radio broadcasts or downloading illegal copies of music or video.
- Using NOAA systems as a staging ground or platform to gain unauthorized access to other systems.
- The creation, copying, transmission, or retransmission of chain letters regardless of the subject matter. A chain letter is defined as a document sent to several persons asking or instructing each person to send copies of the letter to an equal or greater number of persons.
- Using NOAA office equipment to engage in activities that are illegal, inappropriate, or offensive to fellow staff or the public. Such activities include, but are not limited to, creating, downloading, viewing, storing,

- copying, or transmitting material that ridicules others on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin, or sexual orientation. Violations will be interpreted in accordance with relevant statute, executive order, regulation, and case law.
- Creating, downloading, viewing, storing, copying, or transmitting sexually explicit or sexually oriented materials. Violations will be interpreted in accordance with relevant statute, executive order, regulation, and case law.
- Engaging in any activity prohibited by law or regulation, including illegal gambling, weapons, or terrorist activities.
- Using NOAA office equipment for outside employment or business activity (e.g., consulting for pay, sales, or administration of business transactions, sale of goods or services, or the performance of other duties for an employer), or for other commercial purposes.
- Soliciting funds or the sale of items as part of a private fundraising activity, unless authorized by Office of Personnel Management regulations (5 CFR Part 950) and the Standards of Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (5 CFR Part 2635).
- Using NOAA office equipment (e.g., e-mail, facsimile machines, letterhead) to transmit a personal endorsement of any product, service, or enterprise (including professional organizations).
- Using NOAA office equipment to engage in any private lobbying activity, or to engage in any political activity prohibited by the Hatch Act.
- Any use of NOAA office equipment that could generate more than minimal additional expense to NOAA.
- The intentional unauthorized acquisition, use, reproduction, transmission, or distribution of any controlled information including computer software and data, that includes privacy information, copyrighted, trade marked or material with other intellectual property rights (beyond fair use), proprietary data, or export controlled software or data.
- Using an unauthorized password or user ID or unauthorized access to another person's files.
- Leaving your personal computer logged on and unattended overnight.
- Attempting to modify or crash NOAA's Network or any stand-alone NOAA computer system.

## Prohibited Activities

**At all times** (during working or non-working hours), prohibited activities include:

-  Operating a private or commercial business with the use of NOAA computers and Internet resources;
-  Conducting activities directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate, or political group;
-  Using Internet sites that result in an additional charge to the Government;
-  engaging in prohibited discriminatory conduct;
-  obtaining or viewing sexually explicit material;
-  engaging in any activity that would discredit NOAA, disrupt the workplace, or violate the public trust; or
-  violating any statute or regulation.
-  engaging in deliberate activities that recklessly overload network resources, such as downloading large files for personal use. Such files consume too much bandwidth on network servers, thereby limiting or denying service to other users.

This policy does not give employees the privilege to modify Government equipment, e.g., **loading personal software** or **making configuration changes** to hardware or software for personal use.

Users must not install any software on their work computers, network servers, or other machines without first

receiving advance authorization from their ITSSO. Users may not install new or upgraded programs on their workstations.

**No personal software can be installed on any NOAA equipment without the approval of the ITSSO and it must be virus-scanned.**

**Any use of government communications resources is made with the understanding that such use is generally not secure, is not private, and is not anonymous.** System managers employ monitoring tools to detect improper use. Electronic communications may be disclosed within the Department to employees who have a need to know in the performance of their duties. NOAA management officials may access any electronic communications.

## **Reporting Misuse**

Report instances of misuse or inappropriate use of NOAA office equipment to your supervisor, ITSSO/ITSO, or to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Supervisors and management officials must notify the OIG of significant instances of misuse or inappropriate use of NOAA office equipment for investigation and coordination with other law enforcement officials and other offices, as appropriate.

## **What are the consequences?**

NOAA employees and contractors who misuse the Internet, and other computing resources, may be subject to criminal prosecution, and/or administrative disciplinary action, including reprimand, suspension from duty without pay, or removal from your position and Federal employment.